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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, AND FAS
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NAIROBI FOR SFO
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
USUN FOR TMALY
BRUSSELS FOR PBROWN

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SUBJECT: SUDAN - UNHCR FUNDING SITUATION AND PLANS FOR DARFUR
EXPANSION

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 0897 B) KHARTOUM 0767

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Summary

1. On October 2, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Deputy Representative for Sudan Craig Sanders briefed international donors, including USAID, on UNHCR's funding situation for the remainder of 2007. In addition, UNHCR discussed progress in expanding Darfur operations and the cluster system as it applies -- or in this case does not apply -- to Sudan. UNHCR continues to pursue an agreement with the Government of National Unity's (GNU) Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to expand operations into North and South Darfur states. Since early 2007, USAID and other donors have pressed UNHCR to assume responsibility for internally displaced person (IDP) camp coordination and protection sectors throughout Darfur. UNHCR reiterated its commitment to expanding operations from West Darfur to North and South Darfur and reported that despite some progress on the issue, Sudanese government obstructionism still prevails. End Summary.

UNHCR Sudan Programs Facing Funding Shortfall

2. Recently, UNHCR issued two press releases, one on Darfur and one on Southern Sudan, stating that UNHCR is facing a critical funding shortfall for its programs in Sudan. The UNHCR representative noted that while there is a real funding shortfall for the Sudan program, the press releases are also intended to alert donors and the international community to the situation in hopes of raising the needed funds. The representative mentioned that programs are not being cut at the moment, but emphasized that further funding is required to meet stated objectives.

3. According to budget tables presented to the donors, UNHCR's Darfur programs have received USD 13 million out of a USD 19.7 million requested program budget for 2007. UNHCR's Southern Sudan operations have received only USD 45 million out of a USD 56 million requested budget. The UNHCR representative confirmed that the figures presented did not include recent USAID funding for FY 2007, which totals USD 2 million to support protection programs for IDPs

in Darfur and the establishment and staffing up of UNHCR offices in North and South Darfur. Other pledged donor commitments, which would reduce the overall funding shortfall for Darfur, were also not reflected in the tables.

¶4. The UNHCR representative noted that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is also facing funding shortfalls for its returns programs. In FY 2007, USAID provided USD 2 million to support IOM's activities in Darfur and USD 4.5 million for IOM's activities in Khartoum and Southern Sudan. UNHCR and IOM plan to convene a donor meeting under the auspices of the UN Mission in Sudan's Return Reintegration and Recovery Section (UNMIS RRR) to discuss funding issues for the returns programs. At this meeting, the two agencies plan to present donors with a prioritization of urgent needs.

Impact on Programs

¶5. UNHCR was very clear that it is not pulling out of Darfur or closing programs. However, the Darfur and Southern Sudan programs are supplementary budgets, meaning that programs are implemented only after UNHCR receives the funds.

¶6. When asked how the funding shortfall would impact programs, the UNHCR representative stated that it would look at implementation rates of partners to cut costs, have staff depart post early and leave posts unfilled to reduce costs, and tighten administrative budgets. If the funding is not secured in the next few months, UNHCR will have to begin "putting the brakes" on programs.

No Progress in Expanding Presence in Darfur

¶7. The UNHCR representative reported that the HAC continues to

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block plans to expand operations from West Darfur to North and South Darfur. Despite repeated meetings with HAC, UNHCR reported no success in negotiating a memorandum of understanding to operate in the two states. (Note: UNHCR currently has an agreement to operate in only West Darfur. End Note.) In the meetings, HAC repeatedly criticized UNHCR's lack of assistance to alleged returns in Darfur. (Comment: The HAC claims that as many as 80 villages have received recent returns, but IOM and other agencies have conducted missions to verify these claims in several locations and found no returnees. To date, only three areas in South Darfur have been deemed as legitimate returns areas by IOM. End Comment.) UNHCR continues to meet with HAC to gain agreement on the expansion.

¶8. In the absence of UNHCR, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are struggling to coordinate Darfur's IDP camps. This exposes NGO's and OCHA to constant harassment and obstructionism from Sudanese government authorities who view camp coordination as inherently a government function. UNHCR's current situation with the government is ambiguous, but it is moving ahead with expansion plans in Darfur even without explicit government approval. The Sudanese government has stated that they are waiting to assess UNHCR's program in West Darfur before giving the green light for UNHCR to operate in North and South Darfur. Despite numerous attempts and requests on the part of UNHCR for the government to meet with and assess UNHCR's program in West Darfur, the government has yet to assess the program.

¶9. UNHCR also reported that the newly arrived Deputy Special Representative to the UN Secretary General Ameerah Haq is very engaged on the issue of UNHCR expansion and may pursue a UNHCR request to demarche GNU officials on UNHCR's behalf. Haq will likely present the issue as part of a UN reorganization linked to the deployment of UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). An argument will be made that with protection and camp management falling outside of the UNAMID mandate, UNHCR will need to become operational in all three states. Sanders described negotiations with the HAC as

a "grueling process." The UNHCR representative noted that OCHA and other UN agencies are fully supportive of UNHCR assuming these responsibilities.

Managing Expectations

¶10. UNHCR conveyed to the donors a need to manage expectations around UNHCR's expanding presence in Darfur. While UNHCR is confident that it can make marked improvements in the protection and camp management sectors, the representative noted that it will be arriving on the scene under extremely difficult circumstances and expects Sudanese government obstructionism to continue. These difficult circumstances will hinder UNHCR's ability to become fully operational immediately.

¶11. UNHCR reported that in anticipation of obtaining GNU agreement to operate in North and South Darfur, it has redeployed two experienced Darfur staff to assist with camp coordination in 2008. UNHCR is preparing to assume these new responsibilities, but most of the work is internal at this point, including completing all the bureaucratic procedures to open offices, hire staff, and secure appropriate funding.

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